

To Whom It May Concern:

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. This one-sided exposé of a presidential candidate with no room for rebuttal or an alternative viewpoint shows a demonstrated attempt to unduly influence an election.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we see that they may be tempted to use this strong power to bolster an agenda set by the board of directors and political allies rather than what is truly in the public interest. Presenting two comparable documentaries that offer two differing points of view in a similar manner would allow citizens to listen and decide for themselves rather than hear only half of the story. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show how the media, in the control of a few, possesses the power to drastically change opinions and ideas of the American people without a forum for the opposition to air its views. It amounts to undue influence over the American people and an inappropriate use of power.

I strongly believe in freedom of speech; however, if an organization wishes to use public airwaves, especially at no cost, it must abide by certain basic rules set forth by the government: to act in the public interest. It is not in the interest of the American public, nor of our democracy, to have such a strong media giant attempt to alter the outcome of an election using public resources. If Sinclair wishes to run such a controversial piece on a war that occurred decades ago, it must, in the interest of an informed and free society, air an opposing viewpoint. Our democracy only works insofar as the people are given access to important facts about issues and freely make an informed decision as to whom they wish to put in office.

Thank you.